

- Training survey results / docs
- AAC survey results

About this document

This is an unpolished rough draft.

This is a proposal for proper career coaches within the EA movement to help people take action on their career plans and improve their chances of success entering an EA-aligned career path.

I'm sharing this document with:

- Current EA coaches & career advisors
- 1-2 community builders
- 1-2 community members

Feedback requested

- Green highlighting indicates the crucial considerations that I don't have the insight to evaluate

Proposal: EA Career Coaching

What is the problem?

I estimate ~300 to 1000 (60% CI) EA candidates seeking to building career capital or pursuing direct work (at both EA and non-EA aligned organisations) to pursue a EA-aligned career path may face any of the following challenges:

- Lack of personal confidence or ambition
- Lack of knowledge on how to succeed in a path despite aptitude for it
- External or internal stressors
- Lack of accountability
- See [below](#) for a detailed breakdown

ITN Overview:

- Scale: The addressable market could be ~50-500 people with a 2-10% growth rate per year
- Neglectedness: It is unclear if they get support they need from existing solutions
 - The most commonly cited barriers to further involvement in EA were lack of job opportunities and it being too hard to get an EA job (52%).

- The main ways people wanted to become more involved in EA were an EA-aligned career (58%)
- Tractability: Career coaches are common & good career coaches appear to be useful at helping people land dream jobs / improve their current career situation. EA coaches in general receive positive feedback (e.g. Lynette Bye), and career 1-1s seem to be somewhat useful, although evidence is limited (pending a forthcoming paper by Animal Advocacy Careers). More research would need to be done to determine how valuable coaches could be relative to other services.

Rationale:

- 80K frequently mentions about the best candidates often being under confident in their own abilities and/or not being ambitious enough.
- We (Vaidehi & Cristina) also found a lack of motivation and personal uncertainty was some of the top bottlenecks in a [survey of group organisers from 2020](#)
 - It's possible being part of the EA movement might reduce confidence over time, but we are uncertain to what extent this is true
- There's a gap between when people choose a cause / career and them actually succeeding in pursuing that career path.
- Job applications can take a large mental toll on the community and are a large resource (time) commitment. I estimate [~42,000 person-hours](#) are spent on EA job applications per year.

Challenges people might face

Reason	Prevalence (Number of people, I expect there's a lot of overlap between the groups)	Neglectedness (1 - very neglected, 5 - not neglected at all)	Tractability (1 - impossible or requires a lot of resources, 5 - trivial and/or can be done with few resources)
Poor calibration of their own abilities / opportunities	???	2 (Career 1-1 Reading posts)	2
Uncomfortable with being ambitious or "selling yourself"	???	1	2
Unaware of how to do career stuff & network	500-1000???	Non-EA career coaching Non-EA generic resources	1

Productivity issues (e.g. poor prioritisation)	500-1000?	3? EA Coaches e.g. Lynette, Daniel non-EA coaches	3
External life stressors (e.g. family in need)	100-500 (not including overlap with mental health)	3? EA Peer support facebook group, therapists (see below), CEA community health team	4
Mental health issues (e.g. depression)	500-1500	4 EA therapists e.g. Ewelina non-EA therapists	4
Lack of accountability structure / motivation / boost			
People might lack networks and personal friends who provide any/all of the above			

Proposed Solution

EA Career Coaches

Clarifications on EA career coaches in general:

- This is proper “career coaching” as opposed to career 1-1s
- This would be the next or parallel step to narrowing down possible career paths (if the person is under confident, they may still need encouragement to pursue some paths)
- The coach would ideally have in-depth knowledge of the EA community as well as career coaching knowledge (for non-EA jobs as well)
 - They could supplement their knowledge through extensive reading and networking

Assumptions

- Career coaching is useful and produces results
- There is adequate demand (prevalence table above) for this service
- This is sufficiently different from services provided by existing EA coaches that the target audiences would have small (ish) overlap

- This would be different from corporate career coaching because there would be less emphasis on just making the client happy - it would also be thinking about what's best for the community

Kinds of support career coaches could provide


Rating indicates how easy it would be for the client to get this feedback elsewhere and how much it could influence their decisions / increase their chances of success.

		Type of support provided			
		(EA-specific) Calibration & Aptitude checking	(EA specific) Practical Advice (e.g. resumes, interviews, networking)	Emotional Support, Guidance & Encouragement	Strategic (Long-term) Planning
Stage of the journey	Pivotal transition	Very useful	Very useful	Very Useful	Useful
	Post-transition career journey	Somewhat Useful (?)	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful

	Pivotal transition	Post-transition career journey
Neglectedness	Neglected (Only WANBAM (with limitations) and small informal programs)	Somewhat neglected (informal feedback and networks may suffice)
Feedback Loop	Short / Easy	Long / Hard
Past success of this approach	Strong. WANBAM has had positive feedback, as well as other EA coaches.	No track record per se.
Potential impact	High, but with high variance depending on what service is offered.	Very high but with high variance since there are replaceability concerns.

FOR DOING THESE THROUGH COACHING: (*) indicates more research needed	(EA-specific) Calibration & Aptitude checking	(EA specific) Practical Advice (e.g. resumes, interviews, networking)	Emotional Support, Guidance & Encouragement	Strategic (Long-term) Planning
Demand	High	High	Medium ?	Medium
Difficulty of execution	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Scalability (i.e. across causes)	Low-mid	Mid	High	Mid-High

Types of Coaching	Cost	Effectiveness (might depend a lot on the goals, there may be little variation between them)
Individual (1-1)	High	
Small Group Coaching (3-5)	Medium	
Course / Moderated Sessions (5-10)	Low	
Peer Support Group (Coordination only)	Very Low	

	Target Audience	Structure	Notes
Pivotal Transition	<p>Foundational Introductory knowledge of EA (referred by existing career, meta orgs & local groups)</p> <p>Stuck in their career journey / not sure how to take the next step due to miscalibration, lack of knowledge, negative feelings associated with networking / applying etc.</p> <p>Would filter when applying / in an introductory call if the person could better benefit from other help (e.g. therapy, productivity coaching etc.)</p>	<p>4-8 sessions (70% CI) the first ~0.5-2 years of a career</p> <p>Theory of change: We would be improving the chances that the “outcome of entry or transition attempt” in the diagram below from my model of individual engagement is successful.</p> 	<p>Could almost be a matchmaker between orgs / positions and people or recommend people to jobs.</p>
Post-transition career	<p>Successfully completed a pivotal transition (see above) or already on a chosen path</p>	<p>4-12+ sessions over several years (70% CI), probably the first ~3-6 years of a career</p> <p>Theory of change: We would improve the journey before and after the first successful entry - careers are long and there may be multiple pivotal moments. We think the first pivotal moment is</p>	

probably the most important as it is more likely people will be able to get better opportunities as their network improves.



Key Uncertainties

Cost-effectiveness (CEA)

- Is this as or more cost-effective than doing career 1-1 calls?
- 4-8x more costly than 1-off career 1-1 calls
 - Those are measured by
 - Not sure if it can be an apples to apples comparison since career 1-1s tend to have different goals - primarily trajectory change
 - But they can also cause speed ups and increase chances of success by providing useful feedback (e.g. making connections, concrete advice)
- This one would be mostly in the speed up & feedback category, more so than trajectory change
 - If it can increase chances of success by 50%(?), then seems worthwhile
 - If the funding model is partly paid by clients, then it could be less effective and still be cost-effective
- Existing model: WANBAM

Limiting Factors

- Counterfactual replaceability
 - Existing coaches start offering this service or targeting this group of people or the need is being met by existing coaches
 - An 80/20 solution could be to create a dedicated career peer support group
 - How much of this is WANBAM able to provide?
- Size of problem / Demand
 - Need input from others (see table on page 1)
 - Can also run cheap tests to gauge demand/need if it seems there might be a sufficient population size
 - Run some polls with simple questions
 - Send out interest form for online career-related workshops
 - Run a 1-off session e.g. resume writing workshop

Full evaluation of idea

Evaluate ideas deeper dive (put all into a [weighted factor model](#))

- Strength of idea
 - Cost-effectiveness (CEA)
 - 4-8x more costly than 1-off career 1-1 calls, but if it has even a 3-4x success rate, then seems worthwhile
 - Evidence: Success in other cause areas
 - We could look at AAC's study to see what they find on what helps people actually land jobs
 - Evidence: Success in external movements
 - Not sure, would need to research

- Limiting factor
 - Funding
 - Model similar to other coaches seems best (sliding scale with some support from EAIF initially)
 - Coach would need to build up credibility, maybe by offering services for free or cheap first
 - Talent
 - Existing coaches, counsellors & community builders (esp. Those who've done 1-1s) seem like good fits with adequate training in their weak areas
 - Coaches: how hard do you think it is to provide services like this?
 - **Counterfactual replaceability**
 - ~~Existing coaches start offering this service or targeting this group of people or the need is being met by existing coaches~~
 - An 80/20 solution could be to create a dedicated career peer support group, which could fix the accountability issue
 - WANBAM
 - Size of problem / Demand
 - People may not be willing to make a commitment (e.g. pay for the service), so demand could drop off sharply
 - Not sure, need input from others (see table on page 1)
 - **Alternative: Run Cheap tests** to gauge demand/need
 - Run some polls with simple questions
 - Send out interest form for online career-related workshops
 - Run a 1-off session e.g. resume writing workshop
 - Logistical bottlenecks
 - NA
- Execution difficulty
 - Difficulty of founding
 - NA - Seems pretty standard coaching business model
 - (less concerned about this because I feel confident that we can find & train people via Charity Entrepreneurship if this idea is promising enough)
 - Difficulty of running well)
 - Seems like coaching is a skill that can be learnt if one has the aptitude (e.g. soft skills)
 - Many community builders already offer career 1-1s which seem to be going okay
 - Does this seem right?
 - Training or finding excellent coaches could be very difficult
 - Potentially, we only need 1-2 excellent coaches as per current demand
 - People may not trust coaches until they've built up some track record of success

- If coaches do not have sufficient knowledge, they can tap into mentor networks like WANBAM, personal contacts and/or assign clients how to network
 - Feedback loop
 - Pretty easy to measure coach will develop close relationships to clients and could track their progress over time
 - Existing coaches: is this right?
- Probability of success
 - If the prevalence rates are sufficiently high in areas not related to mental health or external situations then I think it could be pretty high
- Externalities
 - Effects on the EA movement
 - Positive if people are succeeding in careers more
 - Spreading knowledge of career coaching:
 - Coachees spread by word of mouth to others
 - Coaches engage in resource creation like Lynette
 - Information value
 - Could be quite high to run a pilot to gauge demand and how easy it is to ensure success
 - Could first check general career coach success rates & reasons for this to calibrate properly'

Next Steps

- Talk to coaches
- Gauge demand (through experiments)
 - Send interest form for online career events (e.g. resume writing workshop)
 - Start a peer-to-peer career support group
 - Run a survey for an experimental peer to peer problem solving from EA Fellowship Weekend asking some questions related to career coaching

Chat / feedback from career coaches

Feedback from Daniel

Regarding "how big is the need":

- I recently talked to Kat Woods who ran a small survey (n = 17) among EAs about their view of and demand for coaching. From their findings: The most common reasons for not having a coach were cost and lack of awareness of coaching. The most common thing to-be-excited-about having a coach is career coaching. This suggests that career

coaching might indeed be among the highest-priority areas for coaching in EA. Maybe it would be helpful for you to talk directly to Kat about this.

- My own sense is that people across all levels of experience and probably career paths would likely benefit from high-quality career coaching. The bottlenecks will be very different depending on the individual client. For some, it might be a deeper understanding of their own profile and personal fit; for others, it might be emotional support and accountability to get through the application process. Some of that might require the coach to be able to give advice. I imagine that financial costs would be one of the main obstacles to getting career coaching.
- In my coaching practice, this type of coaching has made up \approx 3-5% of my overall work over the last two years.

Regarding "do existing solutions cover this need":

- In short: I don't think so.
- My sense is that EA coaches (mostly Lynette and myself) don't currently meet the bar for "high-quality career coaching" because we haven't done enough work in this area. I don't want to speak too much for Lynette though; probably she'd have more to say on this topic herself.
- 80k generally seems to have a long waiting list for career advising. You might want to talk to them directly to learn more. I'd expect that they have much more relevant information on the "market for EA career coaching" than I do.
- Some local groups seem to be doing solid work on this front, and might get to a point where they can provide good career coaching with a bit more training and studying.

Regarding "would people reach out for such a service (and be willing to pay) on their own":

- Hard to say. My intuition is that many people aren't highly aware of coaching as a strategy to advance their career goals.
- Costs generally seem like an obstacle to getting coaching. If one could subsidize this through e.g. EA Funds, that might mostly remove this obstacle.
- I think that people trust established brands like 80k a lot, but would be hesitant initially to work with a new career coaching project until there's a decent amount of "social proof".

Chat with Kat

- EA movement is very easy to reduce your self-esteem, e.g. ivy league school
- By the same token, some people are worried and they should be worried
- How do you find the filter?
 - Kat wouldn't sign up for this but some kind of frank honesty source and people will just tell you

- Most people can't evaluate from afar about this
- First things when thinking of doing projects: is anyone else is already doing it and can you steal from it
 - E.g. all job coaching will involve this
 - Just go and find a good job coaching service
 - Hard to tell which ones are good or not
 - I spent 10 hours and here are the top 1-2 based on my search
 - Super 80/20 of it
 - Nonlinear is working on longtermist causes - making a bundle of services that if you've got funding from OPP / LTFF then we will give you access to free services
 - Would cost money, but go to the meta fund we will do the funding
 - Part of top schools / part of EA group (won't get overused) and provide funding to go to the people
 - Getting the commitment - subsidizing it - e.g. paying \$20 or something instead of \$60-80
- Figure out ways to make it so that it will continue without you - make sure there's a structure, give people titles
 - Set up board meetings, once every 4-6 months to sit down with the people so there is some degree of accountability
 - Expectation to hire their replacement - expectations set from the beginning
 - Have a website & about us page with their photo - they know they are associated with something publicly & have a title
- Kat's doc : Internal document, can see action items, don't share with tons of other people

Chat with Lynette

- Different coaches will take different paths
 - E.g. making the most of the path
 - Quite a lot of variation in what this could cover
 - Kat's survey - common interest was career coaching, but not sure how uniform the definition of that is
- Most likely version:
 - People want career coaching
 - The coach needs to be able to calibrate to the person and give them realistic feedback on how ambitious they should be etc.
 - This would take more time / investment from both the person & the cost
- Which audience are we targeting?
 - Wide range of people with capabilities for taking on ambitious roles
 - Screening for how hardworking or ambitious - it could go more quickly to provide more tailored feedback
 - Like an application process with work trials, talks to the coach
 - To see what kinds of things they could be good at and giving a lot of feedback

- Are there services out there that could do this?
- Closer to coaching than screening
- Problem with EA that's different from others is that calibration of feedback matters a lot - EAs are more likely to know how likely they are to succeed than feel good about some endeavour
- Traditional career coaching is about people feeling happy
- There could be ways around cause area differences, but it is a possibility.
- Matchmaking for jobs service
- Talk to EA Training about this
- What is the crux for her / moving into the space
 - She wants to help people excel within their career path
 - Deliberate practice areas and improve those in a targeted fashion
 - Could overlap with the training stuff
 - If there was a version of this was paid for by clients and that was sustainable revenue model, and it seemed to be working along EA axes seems like it could be pretty exciting as a model from showing benefit from the client perspective that this is helping
 - Pay vs not pay
 - We have more resources on the financial side than the people side
 - If this worked really really well but the people who it's most effective couldn't afford to pay for it - then it's worse for causing impact - need to be concerned about this
 - If you're offering a free service: high bar for people to continue interacting, which weeds out a lot of people who are not up to it, can't commit
 - Lower barrier to entry on other grounds the harder make the program to show results
 - Easier to let the client set the pace
 - But maybe with this we want to push the client to do more. If the person isn't committed it can be harder for the person.
 - If someone is paying a lot of money they are expecting to get more out of it
 - Balance the social pressure of how to keep someone realistic expectation vs coasting and getting negative unrealistic spirals
- Thinks that resume writing is a small part of career coaching
- Job hunting vs career planning
 - Long-term career planning & ongoing support
 - Kinds of independent projects
 - What jobs to go for and going through that
 - Check-in once in the middle of different things
 - What are you learning, plans to advance - getting coffee to network at their company
 - Targeted interventions

- Hard to know where people are - also a lot more variable
- Easier Test my targeted intervention point - how quickly they get a job lead metric